

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 04066 101531Z

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2662

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 4066

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR CO

SUBJECT: MONTHLY ACTIVITIES REPORT-APRIL 1974.

BUENOS AIRES FOR DEA

SUMMARY. ON THE ENFORCEMENT SIDE, APRIL WAS ONE OF THE MOST PRODUCTIVE MONTHS IN COLOMBIAN HISTORY WITH U.S. CITIZENS FIGURING PROMINENTLY IN A LARGE PORTION OF THE ARRESTS AND SEIZURES. ALL THREE GOC ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THIS EFFORT WITH THE NATIONAL POLICE PLAYING ITS USUAL MAJOR ROLE.

THE GOC POLITICAL MACHINERY SLOWED DOWN CONSIDERABLY DUE TO THE APRIL 21 NATIONAL ELECTIONS AND EASTER VACATIONS. HOWEVER, THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON DANGEROUS DRUGS CONTINUED TO HOLD ITS REGULAR MEETINGS AND AFTER SEVERAL POSTPONEMENTS, THE CUSTOMS PROAG WILL BE SIGNED BY THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND THE AMBASSADOR THE WEEK OF MAY 13. AFTER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE FROM ALL ELEMENTS OF THE MISSION, CONVICTED MURDERER, DRUG TRAFFICKER AND MAJOR FUTITIVE, MANUEL RODRIGUEZ-GARCIA AKA ALBERTO CRUZ WAS INFORMALLY DEPORTED TO THE U.S. ON APRIL 27.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 04066 101531Z

PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE DRUG PROBLEM IN COLOMBIA CONTINUES TO GROW AT A VERY RAPID RATE. THE NUMEROUS ARRESTS AND SEIZURES DURING APRIL ALL RECEIVED WIDE SPREAD MEDIA COVERAGE AND THERE WERE AN INCREASING NUMBER OF FEATURE STORIES AND EDITORIALS CONCERNING DRUGS. SEMINARS ARE BEING PLANNED AND CARRIED OUT IN ALL PARTS OF COLOMBIA WITH ATTENTION BEING GIVEN TO EVERY PHASE OF THE DRUG ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING APRIL THE GOC ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ARRESTED OVER 45 PERSONS ENGAGED IN DRUG TRAFFICKING. OF THIS TOTAL 20 WERE US CITIZENS. (OF THE 40 US CITIZENS CURRENTLY IN JAIL IN COLOMBIA, 37 ARE CHARGED WITH NARCOTICS VIOLATIONS). AS HAS BEEN THE CASE IN PREVIOUS MONTHS, THE MOST ACTIVE GOC AGENCY WAS THE NARCOTICS UNIT OF THE N.P. THIS UNIT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR 21 OF THE ARRESTS. CUSTOMS AND DAS WERE ALSO ACTIVE AND ACCOUNTED FOR THE REMAINING ARRESTS AND SEIZURES.

2. WHILE DETERRED SOMEWHAT BY THE FINAL STAGES OF THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS AND THE TRADITIONAL SLOWDOWN FOR THE EASTER HOLIDAYS, THE GOC AGENCIES INVOLVED WITH NARCOTICS CONTINUED TO MAKE ADVANCES AND HAVE NOW COMPLETED THEIR MODIFICATIONS TO PUBLIC LAW 17 (PENAL CODE FOR NARCOTICS) AND ARE BEGINNING TO GET THESE CHANGES TO THE JUDICIAL LEVEL.

THE CUSTOMS PROAG HAS BEEN READ AND REVISED BY BOTH THE GOC AND THE U.S. AND IS NOW IN FINAL FORM. WHILE THERE HAS BEEN SOME DELAY IN GETTING THE PRINCIPAL GOC OFFICIALS, THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PLANNING AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CUSTOMS, TOGETHER FOR THE FINAL SIGNING WITH THE AMBASSADOR AND AID MISSION DIRECTOR, A FIRM DATE HAS NOW BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 13 IN THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE.

3. DAS, AT THE REQUEST OF DEA, ARRESTED CONVICTED MURDERER, DRUG TRAFFICKER AND MAJOR FUGITIVE MANUEL RODRIGUEZ-GARCIA AKA ALBERTO CRUZ ON APRIL 16. CRUZ, WHO HAD BEEN RESIDING IN COLOMBIA FOR OVER 2 YEARS, HAD
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 04066 101531Z

ESTABLISHED A FAR REACHING DRUG NETWORK, HAD IMPORTANT CONTACTS IN THE GOC, AND SUBSTANTIAL SUMS OF MONEY. FOR OVER A WEEK, DAS DELAYED IN EXPELLING CRUZ TO THE U.S. AND DURING THAT TIME HIS OWN LAWYERS FILED CHARGES AGAINST HIM TO ALLOW THE COLOMBIAN COURTS TO TAKE JURISDICTION AND AVOID HIS EXPULSION. MEMBERS OF THE COUNTRY TEAM CONTACTED NUMEROUS OFFICIALS AT HIGH LEVELS IN THE GOC AND AIDED IN GENERATING PUBLICITY IN THE LOCAL PRESS

CONCERNING CRUZ BACKGROUND. AS A RESULT OF THIS PRESSURE CRUZ WAS INFORMALLY EXPELLED ON APRIL 27 AND IS NOW IN CUSTODY IN MIAMI.

4. THE LARGE NUMBER OF ARRESTS DURING APRIL WERE GIVEN EXTENSIVE COVERAGE IN ALL MAJOR NEWSPAPERS IN COLOMBIA, INCLUDING A NUMBER OF DRAMATIC PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING ARRESTS AT EL DORADO AIRPORT. EDITORIAL COMMENT ALSO INCREASED DURING APRIL WITH THE MAJOR EMPHASIS BEING DIVIDED BETWEEN CONDEMNATION OF THOSE PERSONS ENGAGED IN THE NARCOTICS TRAFFIC TO THE DETRIMENT OF COLOMBIAN PRESTIGE AND PRAISE FOR THE INCREASINGLY SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS OF THE GOC ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN CURTAILING THIS TRAFFIC. THE EXPULSION OF US FUGITIVE MANUEL RODRIGUEZ-GARCIA (ITEM 3) WAS FRONT PAGE NEWS FOR ALMOST A WEEK.

IN EARLY APRIL AVIANCA AND SEVERAL OTHER INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES RAN A SERIES OF VERY EFFECTIVE ADVERTISEMENTS URGING COLOMBIANS NOT TO ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE UTILIZED BY WEALTHY CRIMINALS AS "MULAS" (MULES COURIERS OF SMALL AMOUNTS OF NARCOTICS) IN THE ILLICIT TRAFFIC OF DRUGS.

5. PLANNING FOR THE MAJOR SEMINAR IN MEDELLIN MAY 23-26 IS PROCEEDING VERY WELL AND THE ACCEPTANCE RATE OF THE TOP-LEVEL COLOMBIAN PARTICIPANTS IS EXTREMELY HIGH.

A DRUG SEMINAR, SPONSORED BY THE BINATIONAL CENTER OF PEREIRA WILL BE HELD FROM MAY 7 TO 10. THE EMBASSY NARCOTICS COMMITTEE IS SUPPORTING THE PEREIRA SEMINAR BY PROVIDING A SPEAKER FROM THE COMMITTEE AND SEVERAL SPANISH LANGUAGE HANDOUTS ON DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BOGOTA 04066 101531Z

FUTURE SEMINARS ARE ALSO IN THE PLANNING STAGES FOR CALI, CARTAGENA AND OTHER COLOMBIAN CITIES. ALL HAVE BEEN WELL PUBLICIZED AND BOTH REFLECT AND STIMULATE THE GROWING AWARENESS OF THE COLOMBIAN PUBLIC. VAKY

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